

ELEVENMILE CANYON is managed by the USDA Forest Service to protect its rich natural resources and historic sites, and to provide public recreation. The focal point along this nine-mile route is the South Platte River which begins high above Fairplay and flows in a southeasterly direction across South Park. Below Elevenmile Reservoir, the river turns northeast and cuts into the Pikes Peak batholith - a large mass of igneous rock. Originally called "Granite Canyon," the towering walls are composed of Pikes Peak granite that have been polished gray from years of weathering. In places the canyon rises dramatically 500 feet above the river.



Colorado Midland Railway and Old Car in "Granite Canyon." Photo Courtesy of Special Collections, Pikes Peak Library District. Image 001-732.



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TRAINS, TUNNELS & TROUT



Elevenmile Canyon Scenic & Historic Auto Tour

Lake George, Colorado

Elevenmile Canyon and surrounding lands are now part of the **South Park National Heritage Area**. National Heritage Areas are distinctive landscapes shaped by natural, historic and recreational resources. These areas are designated by Congress and tell a nationally important story through their geography, man-made structures, and human traditions.



1 Originally known as “Rocky,” the town of **Lake George** had its beginnings as a stage stop between Colorado Springs and Leadville. George Washington Frost moved to the area in 1886 to raise cattle after selling his box factory in Boston. The next year he built a dam on the South Platte River which became known as George’s Lake. Ice was cut from the lake to refrigerate railroad box cars filled with fruits and vegetables. When a post office was established in 1891, the town name was changed to Lake George.



Granite Canyon and Midland Railway (ca. 1890). Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, L.C. McClure. MCC-796.

Construction of the **Colorado Midland Railway** started in 1886 and ultimately spanned 261 miles between Colorado Springs and New Castle. The winding section through “Granite Canyon” was completed by April “1887.” For thirty-two years the Midland hauled coal, livestock, hay, wool, lumber, produce, other goods, and passengers, before ending service in 1918. It is thought to be the largest abandoned rail project in the world.



Boy Scouts at Camp Alexander in 1948. Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. X-14770.

2 **Lidderdale** was a spur off the Midland line where a telegraph device was once located. Named after William Lidderdale, Governor of the Bank of England, the property is now part of the Camp Alexander Boy Scout Camp.

In 2004 the **Trees for Trout Program** placed dead ponderosa pines from the Hayman Fire area to increase trout habitat near the Lidderdale site. Here, partially submerged trees along a thousand feet of river benefit fish and anglers alike.



Trees for Trout river enhancements (above) and the Lidderdale site (right).



3 About 2.8 miles into the canyon, **Elevenmile Dome** (above) is one of many named granite outcrops. Others include Arch Rock, Turret Dome, Rock of Ages and the Fortress, to name a few. Nearly 100 different routes have been established here since rock climbing began in earnest during the 1960s.



Tunnel 9 is one of three Midland Railroad tunnels encountered in “Granite” (now Elevenmile) Canyon.



Tunnel 9 (ca. 1890). Denver Public Library, Western History collection, Wm Henry Jackson. WHJ-748.

4 Locomotive smoke residue is still visible in and around three different **Colorado Midland tunnels**. Here it’s easy to imagine locomotives billowing smoke as they chugged through the canyon.



The Rock of Ages (above) is now Idlewild Picnic Ground. Wildflower excursion at Idlewild Park in 1914. Photo Courtesy of Special Collections, Pikes Peak Library District. Image 001-4135

5 A railroad station at **Idlewild** had several buildings, stock pens, and a telegraph device. This was a favorite stop for Colorado Midland wildflower excursions from Colorado Springs. Located in Idlewild Park, the Rock of Ages is a well-known landmark near the end of Elevenmile Canyon Road.



Reservoir Campground first opened in the 1930s. The name was changed to Spillway Campground (at left) in the 1970s.



Colorado Midland Picnic Grounds in Granite Canyon (ca 1885). Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, Wm Henry Jackson. WHJ-130.

6 From **Spillway Campground**, Eleven Mile Dam can be seen in the distance. Built in 1932, Eleven Mile Reservoir stores up to 97,000 acre feet of water for the city of Denver.